

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
CARRIZO INTEGRATED RESOURCE AREA
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #6

LINCOLN COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

USDA - FOREST SERVICE
LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST

An environmental assessment (EA) that discusses proposed management strategies on National Forest system lands on the Smokey Bear Ranger District, located near the Carrizo, Patos and Tucson Mountains in Lincoln County, New Mexico is available in the Forest Supervisor's Office in Alamogordo, New Mexico.

Based on the analysis and evaluation described in the EA, it is my decision to implement Alternative 2 for resource project scheduling on these National Forest System lands. This alternative, as proposed: (1) emphasizes an ecosystem management strategy to restore watersheds to satisfactory condition, increase forage production for wildlife and livestock, increase the supply and improve distribution of water for wildlife and livestock, and improve the overall health of the ecosystem; (2) provides a schedule of resource projects within the Carrizo Integrated Resource Area to be analyzed and implemented from 1991 through 1996; and (3) amends the Lincoln National Forest Plan (the Plan) by changing the Standards and Guidelines for Management Areas 1A, 1B, 1D, and 1E, to allow projects under the ecosystem management strategy to be analyzed and implemented. Replacement pages containing the changes are attached. They should be inserted into existing copies of the Plan at pages 19, 58, 60, and 65-67.

It is necessary to amend the Plan because the Management Area Standards and Guidelines originally contained in the Plan limit the flexibility needed to accomplish the objectives for the Carrizo Integrated Resource Area. These objectives, as outlined on pages 1 and 2 of the EA include the following:

- Meet Planning Area / Resource Objectives through implementation of planned projects.
- Develop a successful approach to ecosystem based management to achieve desired future condition for non-commercial forest land, which can be applied throughout the Lincoln National Forest and Region-wide.
- Evaluate and monitor alternative methods of managing woodland watersheds.
- Implement Geographic Information System as an analysis and tracking tool.
- Develop the knowledge and practical experience of District/Forest personnel and publics to implement the Southwestern Region's *Integrated Resource Management - Project Implementation Process* on future planning areas.
- Increase public understanding, support and participation in ecosystem management for pinyon-juniper ecosystems.
- Incorporate the results from this planning effort into Forest Land Management Plan Standards and Guidelines through the Plan amendment process, to provide the linkage for out-year planning and budgeting.

Alternative 2 was selected because it best meets the overall resource objectives for watershed, wildlife, range, and economics. It provides a means to evaluate different technologies for management of the pinyon-juniper ecosystem, and promotes public participation, understanding and acceptance for these management practices.

Other alternatives considered in detail were: (1) the no action (no change) alternative to manage lands as directed in the Lincoln National Forest Plan; and (3) the watershed management emphasis alternative which would schedule projects to aggressively treat watersheds in unsatisfactory condition.

Alternative 1 was not selected because it does not meet resource objectives for improving the condition of watersheds in a timely manner, resulting in long-term loss of soil productivity and a continued decrease in forage and natural water supplies for wildlife and livestock. In addition, Alternative 1 was not selected because it does not promote establishment of partnerships to plan and implement projects. Alternative 3 was not selected because it is not economically efficient. The initial costs, as well as yearly maintenance costs to implement Alternative 3 are more than twice the amount of Alternative 2, but the benefits gained are not commensurate with the cost. Effects on wildlife habitat favors big-game species, while small, non-game species' habitat would decline.

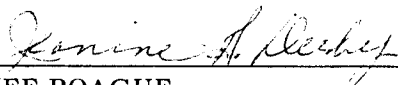
I have determined, based on the environmental assessment, that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. There are minimal irreversible resource commitments and irretrievable loss of resources.
2. There are no significant cumulative effects.
3. The physical and biological effects are limited to the area of planned activity.
4. No known threatened or endangered plants or wildlife are affected.
5. No known cultural resource sites are affected.
6. There are no significant risks to public health and safety.
7. There are no precedents established for future actions with significant effects.

Individual projects proposed as a result of this decision will necessitate site-specific analysis and disclosure of effects to meet the National Environmental Policy Act, National Forest Management Act, and any other laws related to public land management.

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 217. A Notice of Appeal must be in writing and clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Appeals must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 "content of Notice of Appeal" and must be filed with Regional Forester / 517 Gold Avenue SW. / Albuquerque, NM 87102, and simultaneously sent to the Forest Supervisor, Lincoln National Forest / Federal Building / 11th & New York Avenue / Alamogordo, NM 88310, within 45 days of the date of publication of the legal notice of decision in The Alamogordo Daily News. A legal notice will also appear in The Ruidoso News. This project will not be implemented sooner than seven calendar days following publication of the legal notice of decision in the Alamogordo Daily News.

For further information, contact Forest Supervisor, Lincoln National Forest / Federal Building / 11th & New York Avenue / Alamogordo, NM 88310 / (505) 437-6030.

for 
LEE POAGUE
Forest Supervisor
Lincoln National Forest
Alamogordo, New Mexico

4/3/91
Date